

PROCESSED

FEB 18 1999
VOLUME 35 • NUMBER 3
THE LIBRARY

DECEMBER 1998

cca news



*Look, the virgin shall conceive
and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,
which means, 'God is with us.'*

Asia Scene

Historic Breakthrough in Cambodia	3
ACAA Twentieth Anniversary	4
Philippine Churches Call for Peace	5

Global Currents

Setting Sails for New Learning	8
The Ecumenical Forum	9
World Council of Churches Fiftieth Anniversary	12
Asia-Pacific Celebration of WCC Golden Jubilee	13

CCA in Focus

CCA-WCC Globalisation Consultation	16
Jesus the Outcast	18
Human Rights in Nepal	21
Consultation on Peace and Reconciliation in North East India	21
Christian-Muslim Dialogue on Human Rights	23
Training for Cambodian Church Workers on HIV/AIDS	25
Newsbriefs	31
Human Rights Liturgy	36
New Publications	38
Death of Shanti Solomon	39

cca news

VOLUME 33 • NUMBER 3

DECEMBER 1998

Official publication of the Christian Conference of Asia
 96, 2nd District, Pak Tin Village, Mei Tin Road, Sha Tin, NT, Hong Kong, China

Telephone + 852 2691 1068
 Fax + 852 2692 4378
 e-mail cca@hk.super.net

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
 Feliciano V. Cariño

EDITOR
 Geoff Alves

EDITORIAL BOARD
 Mathews George Chunakara
 Glynthea Finger
 Henriette Hutabarat
 Christine Ledger

The preparatory process for the next Assembly of the CCA in 2000 began in earnest over the past few months. The General Assembly Preparatory Committee has begun meeting and is preparing proposals for the Assembly's venue and theme(s), structure and process, leadership and program. A Committee on Constitutional Amendments is going over the constitution and rules and regulations in the hope of proposing revisions and amendments. In June an ad hoc committee on 'clustering' was appointed to review the status of the 'clustering' of programs of the CCA and make a concrete proposal to the next meeting of the General Committee. This committee has now met twice and has noted rather strongly that what is needed is not only a 'review' and a 'clustering' of existing units, but a fresh and more thoroughgoing look at the life and work of the ecumenical movement in Asia, which requires a fresh approach to its structure, its style of work, its priorities, its support and its 'ownership'. The Personnel Committee, meanwhile, is in the final phases of making recommendations of new executive staff to be appointed to the vacancies that have emerged in the past few months. The General Committee that meets at the end of November in Kerala, India, will be crucial in the decisions that it will make, and the new mandates it will give for further preparatory work.

Beyond making preparations for another meeting, in other words, it is becoming clear that what is beginning to happen is a wider and more encompassing effort at looking at the future, what form and shape the ecumenical movement in Asia might become, and what new challenges it might confront in the years ahead and as it moves into a new century and a new millennium. Over forty years of history for the CCA, and fifty years for the World Council of Churches (WCC), provide an astounding accumulation of experience in 'life and work together' that is the basis for this 'fresh look' at ecumenical life in all its varied expressions. The Eighth Assembly of the WCC in Harare will precede by over a year the Eleventh Assembly of the CCA, which will be held in the middle of the year 2000. There is no doubt however that in both organisations the recognition of incredible achievements will be balanced by critical assessments of areas of renewal. Above all, both will be under the pressure of the changed and continually changing conditions of the life of the church and the world that cascade upon us as we face the turn of the century and the millennium. Already, the policy statement on a 'Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches', which was adopted by the WCC's Central Committee, indicates some of the areas in which significant changes will occur. Between Harare at the end of 1998 and the Eleventh Assembly of the CCA in 2000 more suggestions and indications will emerge in terms of where the vital changes will occur.

It is good that the next meeting of the General Committee will take place during Advent and Christmas. These are very special seasons of grace in the Christian calendar, when the challenge to new beginnings is posed to us by the coming of the Prince of Peace. It is also a time when we experience in a very special way that God is with us, and receive the assurance of God's faithfulness.

We extend warmest greetings for the Christmas season and best wishes for a prosperous new year.

Feliciano V. Cariño

Historic Breakthrough

Kampuchea Christian Council formed

About eighty church leaders from different parts of Cambodia (pictured below), mainly representatives of different denominations and Christian organisations, joined together and formed the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) in a special convention held 6-7 August 1998.

A constitution was adopted and office-bearers elected. Cambodia has a multiplicity of denominations and has be-

come a ground for denominational rivalry ever since the country has opened up in 1992. Several ecumenical initiatives collapsed in the past due to this rivalry, in a country where Christians are in a microscopic minority.

The new ecumenical initiative, a breakthrough in Cambodian church history, is an outcome of CCA's effort to bring Cambodian Christians together.

Mathews George Chunakara



Prince of Peace

Our cover painting, by Hanna-Cheriyan Varghese of Malaysia, shows a happy family situation. The woman (Mary) and the man (Joseph) represent humanity and their adoration of the Prince of Peace. In all the varied cultures of Asia, the man and the woman at some time cover their heads ... the woman with a veil and the man with a turban or headdress that often has a tail end. Mary and Joseph's clothes feature Asian design and variety, and the couple emerge from a lotus bloom above the water.



Expanding Artistic Horizons

Asian Christian Art Association celebrates its twentieth anniversary

The Asian Christian Art Association (ACAA) held a special consultation at the Dhyana Pura Beach Hotel, Bali, Indonesia, 16–21 July 1998. Sixty participants from fifteen countries attended. ACAA was born at a conference called by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) to foster work among Christian artists in Asia. It now has national networks in many Asian countries.

The main concern of the Bali consultation, under the theme of 'Hope and New Creation in Christ', was not only to celebrate the past twenty years of ACAA's journey but also to plan for its future and new leadership. An exhibition at the consultation included powerful and splendid artworks brought by many creative Asian artists. More than 110 artworks by thirty-two artists were displayed.

The impressive worship services that took place during the consultation were organised by Glynthea Finger of the CCA women's desk. She was also instrumental in conducting the spirituality workshop for women artists and church leaders that met prior to the consultation.

The performances every night of indigenous Asian dancers expressing their Christian faith were another highlight of the consultation. These included a creative Balinese dance led by Bali artist Nyoman Darsane; a Noh drama, 'Nannya Miriam', the story of

Moses' sister, directed by Yuko Yuasa and presented by the distinguished Japanese Noh actor Nobushige Kawamura; and an Indonesian master of calligraphy, Bagong Kussudiardja, with his team from Yogyakarta. These performances expressed the Christian message through movement and the rich cultures of Asia.

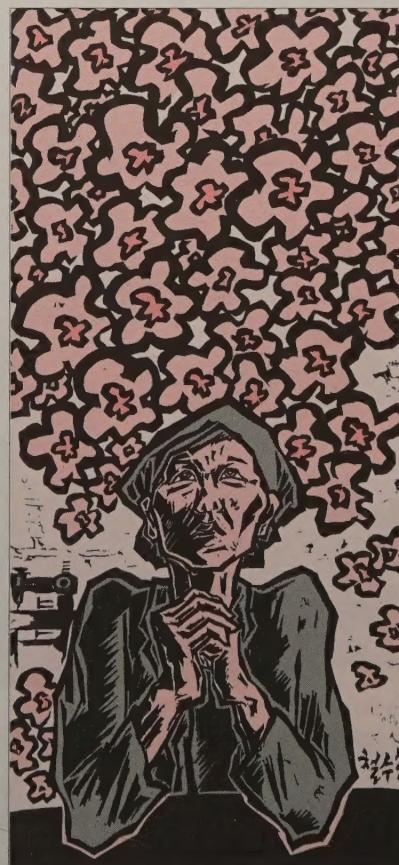
The consultation made a commitment to go forward under its new leadership: Dr Judo Poerowidagdo (Indonesia), president; Ms Hanna Varghese (Malaysia), vice president;

and Dr Alphonso Doss (India), Ms Jae Im Kim (Korea) and Dr He Qi (China), members of the newly formed executive committee.

Prof. Masao Takenaka of Japan, who has been the main directing force in the development of ACAA, indicated the significance of the consultation. 'In Japan we celebrate the life of young people as they become twenty years old,' he said. 'It is the celebration of entering into the life of adulthood. We are very happy to have the new committee formed in Bali to move ahead the program of ACAA. We have considerably expanded our horizon, not only in terms of national and geographical territory, but also in terms of the scope of artistic expression to include bodily movement such as Asian dance to express the Christian message. I am quite certain that under the fine leadership of Dr Judo Poerowidagdo, the new committee of ACAA will move forward to foster the artistic creativity of Christian community in Asia.'

During the consultation, the Matsuoka Award was announced. This award was initiated by Yuko Matsuoka of Japan, president of ACAA for the last six years, to encourage the development of young artists. The following artists received the award from Egai Fernandez of the Philippines, past vice president of ACAA: Shermin Varghese (Malaysia), Sawai Chinnawong (Thailand), Rhuani Rambukwelle (Sri Lanka), and two mountain tribal artists, Cecilia Billung and Sebastiana Dung Dung (India).

Masao Takenaka



Lee Chul-soo (Korea): DREAM OF THE WOMAN TEXTILE WORKER (FROM 'THE BIBLE THROUGH ASIAN EYES', BY MASAO TAKENAKA AND RON O'GRADY, PUBLISHED BY PACE PUBLISHING IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE ASIAN CHRISTIAN ART ASSOCIATION)

Philippine Churches Call for Peace

Peace Negotiations

National Council of Churches in the Philippines statement enjoining the Estrada Administration to continue GRP-NDF peace negotiations

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines is thankful to the Lord of Peace, and is at the same time gladdened by the declared policy of the Estrada Administration to continue the peace negotiations between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF).

A milestone was reached in the peace negotiations with the signing by both negotiating panels on 10 April 1998 of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

Believing that the Comprehensive Agreement would greatly advance the cause of peace, the executive committee of the NCCP had written to the former Philippines President, Fidel V. Ramos, last April, urging him to sign the document as one of the principals. However, this had not happened as he ended his term.

Justice and indemnification continue to elude the victims of human rights violations, many of them belonging to the poorest sectors of society who rightfully demand the approval of the Comprehensive Agreement.

The administration's approval is a giant leap that will enable both the GRP



and the NDF panels to proceed immediately to the formal negotiations on social and economic reforms, and can help solve the worsening economic crisis. Further, results of the negotiations can contribute to the political and constitutional reforms contemplated by President Estrada. This will redound to the strengthening of our national sovereignty and democracy, conserve national patrimony, and promote territorial integrity.

We believe that shalom (the biblical peace) is a mandate from God and government leaders and governed people are tasked to be instruments of peace. As the Apostle Peter wrote, 'He must turn from evil and do good. He must seek peace and pursue it.' (1 Peter 3:11)

As it has supported the peace process in the past, the NCCP reiterates its support to the peace agenda of the government as indicated in President Estrada's Framework of Governance: 'We will build on the gains achieved under the peace process and see it to its completion. We will elevate the peace process to higher level ... that the root cause of internal conflicts are addressed more decisively.'

We therefore urgently enjoin the present administration under President

Joseph Ejercito Estrada to approve the agreement, as a fitting contribution to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights. This will pave the way to the country's entrance to the 'century of peace'.

Issued by the Officers of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 23 July 1998

Bishop Daniel C. Arichea Jr

(Chairperson)

Bishop Roman B. Tiples Jr

(General Secretary)

Worse Than the First

National Council of Churches in the Philippines statement on the proposed Visiting Forces Agreement

'When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, "I will return to the house I left." When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean, and put in order. Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.' (Matthew 12:43-45, NIV)

When the Philippine Senate voted for the rejection of the renewal of the US Military Bases Agreement on Sep-

tember 1991, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines rejoiced with the Filipino people for such a historic feat. The council was consistent in its stand towards the dismantling and total withdrawal of the bases because these hinder the Filipinos' desire for true freedom, progress and democracy, which the Bible calls 'abundant life' (John 10:10).

But like the proverbial evil spirit, the US military establishment was not able to find rest. It has been trying its best to return to the Philippine household. This was done through a series of proposals culminated by the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), which the Estrada Administration is seeking approval for from the Senate.

The council condemns the attempts to provide a backdoor entry to the evil spirit that the Filipino people has exorcised.

Clearly, the VFA is a violation of Philippine sovereignty as US forces will be given special treatment while Filipinos are relegated to second-class citizenship in their own country. It will violate the 1987 Philippine Constitution (Article II, Section 8) that bans the presence of foreign military forces and the entry of nuclear weapons into the country. The VFA will provide breeding grounds for the rise of anti-social activities like prostitution, drug abuse and human rights violations.

The mere presence of the military forces will expose the country to dangers such as accidents in the live firing of ammunition during military exercises, and destruction of the environment due to the dumping of toxic wastes. These are also threats to peace as the American military forces will make the country a target in case the US is involved in an armed conflict.

Worse, the VFA will make the whole country a virtual military base where the USA can operate in any port and airport. We believe that the Filipinos' household is not unoccupied. The blossoming of nationalism and freedom that caused us to rise against the Spanish conquistadors will again cause us to reject the VFA.

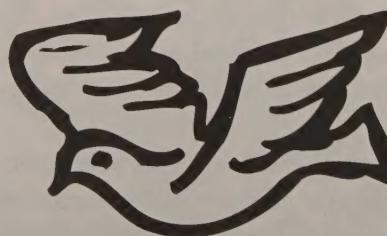
We should heed the parabolic warning in the Gospel that after we have driven out the American military bases, welcoming them through the VFA will put our country to a condition worse than before.

Issued by the Officers of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 23 July 1998

*Bishop Daniel C. Arichea Jr
(Chairperson)*

*Bishop Roman B. Tiples Jr
(General Secretary)*

Swedish Church Concerned by Nuclear Testing



The Mission Covenant Church of Sweden (MCCS) General Conference and SMU (the MCCS youth movement), meeting in Jönköping in June expressed strong concern that the ongoing satisfactory development of increased disarmament had been broken by the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan.

MCCS supported churches and Christians in India and Pakistan who have reacted in different ways against the nuclear tests of their own countries. They pointed out that rearmament is clearly disadvantageous to developmental work aiming at provid-

ing better conditions for the millions of poor and underprivileged in society.

The church noted that Sweden gives assistance to India, both through the state and through NGOs, and also to Pakistan through NGOs, while at the same time exporting arms and war equipment. The Swedish government is involved in efforts to sell fighter air-

craft to countries that are at the same time recipients of Swedish assistance. This double standard of morality is as hard to understand for MCCS as it is for many people in those countries.

The church exhorted its government to:

- continue to call for disarmament in various international bodies
- stop Swedish arms exports to India and Pakistan
- consider the consequences of the interrupted state assistance to India, to avoid a situation where the poorest are the ones who are the most affected.

Affirming Life Amidst Endangering Forces in Asia

Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern General Assembly

The General Assembly of the Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia was held at the YMCA Collins in Bangkok, Thailand, 2–4 September 1998. Approximately forty-five directors from a number of member academies across Asia met under the theme 'Affirming Life Amidst Endangering Forces in Asia'. The guest speaker, Dr Tien Chaya Kiranandana, rector of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, divided his presentation into two sections:

- endangering forces, particularly those existing now and probably expanding into the next decade
- the concepts and ideas that are the cause of endangering forces and our role in helping to remedy it.

Dr Kiranandana invited his listeners to look into their own selves and search their morality. In doing this, he posed the following questions:

- Do we help fuel the problems by careless overspending?
- ... or by being silent and not protecting our rights as well as not honouring the rights of others?
- Are we careless in realising our duty and condone the negligence of others in doing theirs?
- Are we drifting in the sea of conformity without caring to choose what is right and what is wrong?
- How are we going to do our little part to help restore the situation?

During the subregional meetings and the plenary sessions issues pertaining

to four categories, socioeconomic, religio-cultural, women/gender and ecology and politics were raised and debated. The current economic crisis gave an urgency to the proceedings.

Bible studies were led by Yosef Widyatdmaja and Dr Robert Burang from Indonesia.

The new executive committee for 1998–2003 is Mr Sudhakar Ramteke (India, Chair), Dr Ahn Jae-Wong (Korea, Vice Chair), Dr Felix Sugitharaj (India, full-time Secretary), Mrs Priscilla Atuel (Philippines, Treasurer), and Yosef Widyatdmaja (Indonesia) and Chuang Ya-Tang (Taiwan), members. The CCA Education Desk Secretary is an ex-officio member.

Glynthea Finger

Empowering Women

Following discussion between Barbara Maubach, Executive Secretary for WCC Scholarship, and Glynthea Finger, the CCA Education Desk Secretary, it was decided to hold a meeting on the theme 'Empowering Women' to coincide with the Gender Awareness and Sensitivity Course being held in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Consequently, national correspondents from across Asia responsible for coordinating scholarship applications for their countries met with Ms Maubach and with the GASC participants on 12 June.

National correspondents and others who were present, Rev. Dr Tso Man King (Hong Kong Christian Council), Ms Oshima Kaori (NCC Japan), Rev. Kang Yong-Kyu (NCC Korea) Rev. Dr Hermen Shastri (Council of Churches Malaysia), Rev. Smith (Myanmar CC), Elder Dr Ajmal Khan (NCC Pakistan), Cora Tabing-Reyes (NCC Philippines), Sayan Muangsak (Church of Christ Thailand), Mr Jintaro Ueda (Asian Rural Institute, Japan), Estrella Borja (SEARSOLIN, Philippines) and Glynthea Finger (CCA Education Desk Secretary), spoke with the women concerning the needs in education and

capacity building for women in Asia today within community and church life.

Many issues and concerns were raised and were subsequently taken into consideration by the group in their further two days of meeting. It was a time of coming to know each other, as it was the first time many had met in this role, discussing the scholarships program with its possible benefit for women, churches and related organisations and for drawing up a concrete process for the scholarships program at national levels.

Glynthea Finger

What is remembered vividly by the Asians who were present at the program, 'Setting Sails for New Learning', held in Finland by the WCC's newly created Education and Ecumenical Formation team, 19-24 June 1998, is that the nights were nightless ... it never got dark. We were present at the Vittakivi International Centre situated in Hauho, about 140 km north of Helsinki, during the midsummer festival. Those of us from Asia and the Pacific seemed to have the greatest difficulty in coping with the fact that it was never dark. One breakfast we discovered that we were jumping out of bed thinking it was 7 am only later to discover it was only 2 am. However, story telling aside, it was a good experience to celebrate midsummer, with bonfires, dancing and celebrating in the wee hours of the morning, still seeing quite clearly. We also attended a church service on the Saturday of midsummer, which is also a celebration of John the Baptist.

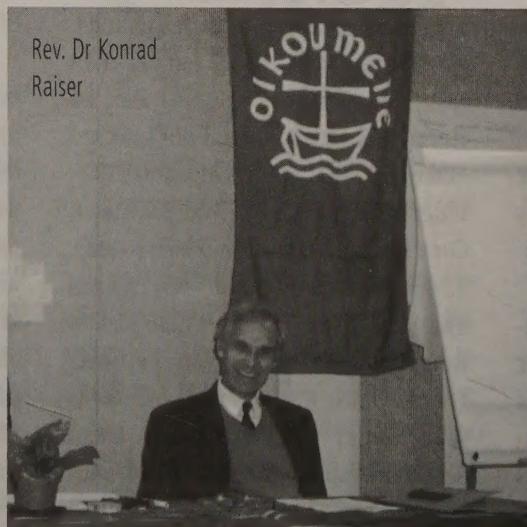
As much as we played joyfully, we also worked quite hard and creatively. Those present were a representative group of educators gathered to consider how the WCC Education and Ecumenical Formation staff team should work in order to meet the needs of the constituency. Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, in his introductory address, 'Why Learning Is Integral to Christian Faith', spoke of the tension between ecumenical learning and ecu-

Setting Sails for New Learning



Celebrating the midsummer festival in Finland

Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser



menical formation. Dr Raiser described these as being two different faces of a comprehensive education process. Formation responds to the Call while learning responds to relationship with God and community. In following the footsteps of Christ we are drawn into learning. Formation emphasises the appropriation of faith. It is characterised by orientation towards the role or task being filled, through knowing the norms, behaviour etc. of community being embraced. Learning is a life-long process that takes place in real-life situations and establishes connection between experience and knowledge. We continue to learn after formation.

After the input, the participants gathered direction through drawing on the experience and wisdom of those present, which resulted in much meaningful discussion. From this emerged two issues: ecumenical formation, which enables the development of discernment, and fundamentalism of all kinds as a context in which many educators work.

Communication via a website and a quarterly newsletter in print and electronic media to share experience across networks was encouraged, along with a study process on holistic education, which will involve eight members of the consultation, representing different regions and educational interests in liaison with one staff member.

Glynthea Finger

The Ecumenical Forum

Over thirty participants attended the meeting on the Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organisations that was held at the Ecumenical Institute, Chateau de Bossey, Celigny, Switzerland, on 26–29 August 1998. (See the first report in *CCA News*, August 1998, p. 24). Convened by the World Council of Churches (WCC), the meeting was called to 'brainstorm' the possibility of calling a wider ecumenical gathering and continuing fellowship that would include churches and organisations that are presently outside the membership of the WCC. Participants included representatives from several regional ecumenical organisations (REOs), including the CCA, world confessional bodies, e.g. the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), partner ecumenical organisations, e.g. the World Alliance of YWCAs and the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), and selected national councils of churches (NCCs), e.g. NCC India, NCCC USA and NCC Australia. Of importance was the presence of representatives from the Pontifical Council for the Advancement of Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church and from one of the Pentecostal organisations. The WCC was represented by

its General Secretary and executive staff from several of its program units. Representatives from a number of member churches of the WCC, e.g. the Russian Orthodox Church, were also present. Consultant for the meeting was Julio de Santa Ana of the Ecumenical Institute.

The program of the consultation included a discussion of a presentation on the idea of the forum by Julio de Santa Ana, and of expectations and perspectives on the forum by the participants. Agreeing to recommend the calling of the forum some time in the year 2001, the consultation drafted proposals regarding the possible objectives of the forum, participants who may be invited and a minimal organisational structure and process that would ensure that while the forum is 'informal' it will nevertheless be 'organised'. The report and proposals of the consultation will first go to the Assembly of the WCC in Harare, and presumably thereafter to possible participating organisations.

Noting that the forum could be a breakthrough towards a more 'inclusive and comprehensive' ecumenical fellowship, participants expressed the hope that discussion of the idea could begin after Harare, and at national, regional and world levels.

Feliciano V. Cariño

Proposals for a Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organisations

The consultation that took place at the Chateau de Bossey, near Geneva, Switzerland, 26–29 August 1998, considered the possible creation of a broad-based forum of Christian churches and ecumenical organisations. Twenty-eight participants represented the WCC, Christian world communions, regional ecumenical organisations, national councils of churches, international ecumenical organisations and churches not at present associated with major ecumenical structures.

The gathering noted dramatic changes in the world situation, as well as major developments in relationships be-

tween churches and between ecumenical organisations. Efforts to advance Christian unity now take many forms, have many players and focus on many centres. However, this diversity raises urgent questions about how to strengthen the wholeness of the movement against tendencies towards fragmentation and competitiveness, not least in view of shrinking resources. A more effective, more sustaining, more inclusive network of relationships is needed to bring differences of understanding among the partners into a mutually committed dialogue so that all may find their way to a clearer discernment and a more faithful obedience.

Proposal

The following proposal for a forum of Christian churches and ecumenical organisations emerged in the course of the consultation. It is offered in the hope that churches and ecumenical structures may discern in it a way forward for the years immediately ahead.

Goals and Objectives

- The proposed forum is **possible** because of the unity that is already given in Christ. It is **called for** because of our common faith in a reconciling God whose church knows itself summoned to become God's reconciled and reconciling people.
- The forum is intended to help build more significant and more inclusive relationships. It will not speak for the participating bodies, but it will provide a way for them, transcending the limitations of existing frameworks, to think new thoughts, dream new dreams and glimpse new visions.
- Seeking to be open to the charisms the Spirit gives to Christ's people, the forum's style will be open, expectant and relying on a minimum of rules and structures. One condition for participation, therefore, is a willingness to accept other participants as bona fide partners in a dialogue, the aim of which is to strengthen the obedience of all to Christ.
- The occasional gatherings of the forum will provide opportunities for worship, exploration of matters of common Christian concern and development of enhanced mutual understanding.

They are not conceived as decision-making, program-initiating or

document-producing events. However, they might lead to new forms of cooperation.

Participation

- This is a forum, not an organisation, therefore the question to be considered is participation, not membership.
- Participation will be based on confessing the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures and seeking to fulfil together the common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- It should be characterised by the desire to mutually engage in the search for obedience to Christ.
- Participants will mainly be representative of church bodies and ecumenical organisations of international significance. Some participants will also be individuals who are representative of and accountable to identifiable constituencies with a commitment to our common calling.
- Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Evangelicals, Pentecostals and other families represented in the Conference of Christian World Communions, as well as regional ecumenical organisations, international ecumenical organisations and the World Council of Churches, are among those envisaged as participants in the forum.
- Criteria of participation include willingness to listen and to talk and respond together with others in the Christian family to God's calling. Participants must have mutual respect and respect for the self-understanding of the others.

Size, Process and Content of the Forum Meeting

- The forum is a concept that will be manifest in many ways, including international meetings. Once the idea has taken root, it could meet in various configurations and locations.
- The initial meeting should be made up of 150–250 participants, depending on the response to the invitations issued. The process will be designed to allow maximum participation. This will begin by soliciting issues and challenges from the participating bodies prior to the meeting.
- There will be a balance of plenary and small-group time, with space for celebration and spontaneity. Worship will be an integral part of the forum. The meeting should reflect awareness of the historical forces that bring participants together and should provide opportunities for in-depth discussion.
- The distinctiveness will be in the style of meeting, which will promote open dialogue of sharing without a focus on documentation and recommendations. No votes will be taken.
- Provision might be made for a group of 'listeners' to help discern and articulate the insights gained by the gathering.

Funding, Timing

- Participants would be expected to cover their costs. In order to ensure fullest participation, the organising committee will seek funds to cover certain overhead expenses and make available a modest amount for subsidies.

- The initial forum meeting may take place as early as the year 2001.

Organising Mechanisms

- A small continuation committee drawn from the consultation of August 1998 will continue as a bridge between the process thus far and its future. It could also become the nucleus of the organising committee for the first forum meeting.
- The continuation committee is to consider responses to this proposal and to work out the modalities of a first meeting of the organising committee by October 1999. This continuation committee will need to meet before mid-1999.
- A small group of eminent persons who have a broad basis of credibility among Christians and churches

might be constituted by the continuation committee to serve as an inviting body.

This group may or may not need to meet. Invitations to participate would then go with the signatures and under the patronage of these persons.

- The organising committee should be called by the continuation committee in consultation with the leaders of the interested bodies who by the responses to the initial proposal sent after this meeting would have expressed interest in the forum.
- The organising committee will include representatives of ecumenical partners of international significance who currently have various levels of collaborating as well as new partners representing the wider community, such as Pen-

tecostal churches, the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Organisation of African Instituted Churches, who may express interest. A strong representation of the Roman Catholic Church was also stressed.

- The tasks of the organising committee will include:
 - receiving and evaluating responses that contribute to building the agenda
 - building an inclusive agenda
 - taking care of logistics and budget of the forum
 - raising some funds for the overhead costs as well as for granting small subsidies for those who might need it
 - preparation of a procedure for evaluating the first meeting of the forum.

Not Forgotten

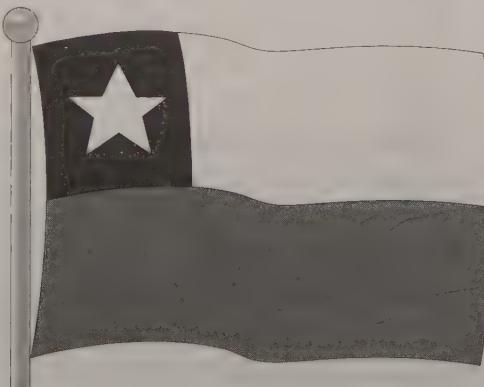
WCC marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Chilean coup

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the military coup that overthrew President Salvador Allende, the World Council of Churches' General Secretary, Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, has written to the churches of Chile:

'We have not forgotten that day. We have not forgotten the suffering and the loss of loved ones which occurred then and during the following months and years of military repression.

'We have not forgotten the witness, the efforts, or the risks assumed then by the leaders and

faithful of the Chilean churches and other religious communities, together with people of other convictions, to save lives and defend the human rights of all.



'We have not forgotten the signs of peace and hope they gave to their people and to the whole world.

'We have not forgotten the welcome you gave Chilean exiles upon their return to their homeland, their families and their loved ones.

'We continue to pray for you. We pray that God will give you the strength to continue until you achieve justice, and to pursue the task of reconciliation of the people which is essential in order that such a tragedy not be repeated in your land ever again!'

WCC

World Council of Churches

Fiftieth Anniversary

From Geneva, Switzerland, the staff home of the WCC, through the seven cities that have hosted past WCC assemblies and on to countless congregations in every continent, there are celebration and thanksgiving services, exhibitions, special lectures and conferences for the WCC's jubilee.

A period of prayer and festivity will culminate on 13 December at the WCC's Eighth Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe, when there will be a public celebration of the life of the WCC, followed by a service at which church leaders and other assembly participants will recommit themselves to the WCC and the ecumenical movement. The theme for the Eighth Assembly is 'Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope'.

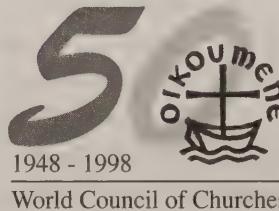
Geneva

For a service in Cathedral St Pierre in September, young people from the city's churches stopped at four churches to collect four segments of a large boat. Joined by members of these churches, the young people took the pieces to the cathedral, where they were assembled. A boat has long been a symbol of the WCC.

Amsterdam

The WCC's founding assembly was in Amsterdam in 1948. An ecumenical service of commemoration and thanksgiving was held in the Old Lutheran Church there. The preacher was His Holiness Aram I, Moderator of the

Around the world Christians are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the World Council of Churches



Central Committee. IKON Television recorded the service for national broadcast the following morning.

Evanston

The WCC's Second Assembly took place in Evanston in 1954. The National Council of Churches in the USA organised a celebration banquet and service for 11 November.

New Delhi

New Delhi, India, the venue of the Third Assembly in 1961, held a regional Jubilee Celebration Worship Service on 20 September (see page 13).

Uppsala

The WCC held its Fourth Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, in 1968. The Archbishop of Turku in Finland, John Vikstrom, preached at a morning service, organised by the Nordic Ecumenical Council, in the Cathedral of Uppsala on 4 October.

Nairobi

A former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, the Rev. John Gatu, preached on 20 September in Nairobi, the city which hosted the Fifth Assembly in 1975.

Vancouver

In Vancouver, Canada, the site of the Sixth Assembly in 1983, a celebration and thanksgiving service was held on 8 November in St Andrew's Wesley United Church.

Canberra

Finally, in Canberra, the Australian city that hosted the 1991 Seventh Assembly, a 'Picnic and Liturgy for Ecumenical Pilgrims' was organised by the New South Wales Ecumenical Council on Sunday, 20 September.

Everywhere

A WCC book of prayers, 'Praying Towards Harare', is available for all who wish to make their own spiritual journey to Harare. The Eighth Assembly will set the priorities and policy for the work of the WCC into the twenty-first century. What it decides and what is subsequently done will in no small measure be dependent on the seriousness with which the churches pray for the ecumenical movement, and recommit themselves to the ecumenical vision to which God calls them at the beginning of a new millennium.

John Newbury, WCC

Asia-Pacific Celebration of the WCC Golden Jubilee

We have come together with joy to thank and praise the Lord, in connection with the golden jubilee of the World Council of Churches. Here are representatives from the World Council of Churches, the Christian Conference of Asia, from Asian and Pacific countries, leaders of Indian churches, Christian members of parliament and other political leaders, members of local parishes, guests from communities of other faiths, and members of the host family, the National Council of Churches in India. I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

It gives me great joy to bring felicitations to the World Council of Churches on the occasion of its golden jubilee. Along with ecumenical colleagues all over the world, we rejoice and praise God for the unique ministry of this unique ecumenical forum.

Introduction

The WCC, according to its constitutional basis, is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The WCC, as all of us know, was founded on 23 August 1948 by the representatives of 147 churches. After fifty years the membership has grown to 332 churches. This is indeed a phenomenal growth empowered by the spirit of God.

Let us at this time remember with thanksgiving the landmark assemblies

In New Delhi, India, the venue of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1961, a regional jubilee celebration worship service was held on 20 September. At this celebration the Most Rev. Dr Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan reflected on the New Delhi Assembly and the WCC's jubilee



in the past: Amsterdam 1948, Evanston 1954, New Delhi 1961, Uppsala 1968, Nairobi 1975, Vancouver 1983 and Canberra 1991. It is heartening to know that similar jubilee celebrations will also be held in all the other cities where the assemblies were held. Let us also with thanksgiving remember some of the great people of God who gave shape and leadership to the ecumenical movement: John R. Mott, Archbishop William Temple, William Adolf Visser't Hooft, Eugene Carson Blake, Philip Potter, Emilio Castro and

Konrad Raiser. Indian leaders deserve special mention, such as Juhanon Mar Thoma Metropolitan, Paulose Mar Gregorios Metropolitan, Dr M.M. Thomas, Ms Sara Chacko, Bishop C.K. Jacob, Bishop Leslie Newbegin, Russel Chandran, Dr Moses and others.

Reflection on New Delhi Assembly

It may be appropriate to briefly reflect on some of the highlights of the assembly held in our country, at New Delhi in 1961. The theme was 'Jesus Christ, the Light of the World', reminiscent of the words, 'Sri Budha', the light of Asia. In the land of the ancient Rishis who prayed, 'Asatho Ma Sat Gamaya, Thamaso Ma Jyothir Gamaya Mrithyo Ma Amrutham Gamaya,' this theme was very appropriate. The assembly came out with a forceful statement on unity. It said, 'We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptised into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship and at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages, in suchwise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.'

The New Delhi Assembly received into membership four Orthodox churches from Eastern and Central Europe, including the Russian Orthodox Church (now the largest member church in the WCC). Several Orthodox churches already belonged to the WCC.

The decision of these Orthodox churches to join the WCC confirmed its intention to be more than a Protestant fellowship and to overcome the political divisions of the cold war.

New Delhi also witnessed the broadening of the fellowship by welcoming a large number of churches from Africa and South America. The increasing participation of the churches from parts of the world where Christianity is growing rapidly has affected the WCC agenda.

The New Delhi Assembly also witnessed the joining of the International Missionary Conference with the WCC to form the World Commission on Mission and Evangelism of the WCC.

The formation of the Church of South India in September 1947 was the result of twenty-eight years of negotiations for unity. The pattern of union was the merger of six branches of the Protestant church called Organic Union. This was hailed as the result of the uniting power of the Holy Spirit and was described as unique in the history of the Christian church. The formation of the Church of North India on the same lines took place in 1970. The Mar Thoma Church, which is a reformed branch of the ancient Eastern Church, took membership in WCC from its inception. It entered into full communion relationships with the Anglican Communion and the Church of South India and the Church of North India. In 1978 a Joint Council of the Church of North India, Church of South India and the Mar Thoma Church was formed as a means of seeking ways for closer relationships and joint action in mission and service. The Mar Thoma Church did not think of merging with the other churches but be-

lieves in seeking ways of joint witness. For those who regard organic union by merger of churches as the pattern for unity, this attitude may appear as a lack of the desire for union. But the experience of the union efforts in different parts of the world during the past twenty years has shown that merger is not regarded as the only way of union or the best way. What is appreciated is the experience of unity of spirit and fellowship in faith and willingness to work together in fulfilling the mission of the church. In this spirit conversations are being held by the Mar Thoma Church with the Orthodox Syrian Church and the Lutheran Church in India for closer relationships and joint action. The CSI also is having conversations with the Methodist Church and the Lutheran Church.

The coming together of the Life and Work movement with Faith and Order Commission has resulted in the establishment of different units of the WCC. The 1968 Assembly at Uppsala emphasised the renewal of the church by presenting the challenge of the poor and the needy in the world. Inter Church Service became an important part of the program of the WCC. Concerns of racial discrimination and women's issues and of refugees and migrant populations became crucial issues to be faced. The Decade of the Churches' in Solidarity with Women announced in 1988 is a very important program.

The reality of multireligious faith and of ideologies had to be faced in the concern for presenting the Gospel to all nations. Thus the WCC had to face new and challenging situations in bearing witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ. Some of the astonishing changes in the WCC and the ecumeni-

cal movement during the past fifty years may be mentioned:

- The Roman Catholic Church, which maintained a deliberate distance from the ecumenical movement at the time of the founding of the WCC, has become a full member of many national ecumenical bodies and maintains regular working relationships with WCC, especially through official membership of the Commission on Faith and Order.
- The participation of women and concerns for youth and children have increased and their voices have been strengthened in ecumenical gatherings.
- The new councils of churches and other ecumenical bodies formed in many local contexts have created a world-wide ecumenical network of which the WCC is an integral part. Thus WCC has become truly a world body.
- The question of integrity of creation and the struggle against the forces of destruction have been taken up on the international level.
- The need for realising unity in the local situation is re-emphasised as very often there is a tendency to keep the results of thinking in the upper strata of ecclesial hierarchy. The church's great task is to make the local congregations as the powerhouse of mission through the four-fold ministry of Worship, Proclamation, Nurture and Development.

Jubilee Celebrations

The WCC is celebrating its golden jubilee especially in the Assembly at Harare. According to Leviticus 25 the jubilee year is the time for liberation

from bondage and restoration of the land to the original owners and thus provide means of livelihood for all people. It is a time for rejoicing and thanking God for his wonderful guidance and for realising the needs of the poor and the oppressed all over the world. We are facing more and more the consequences of the policy of globalisation and marketisation. Multinational corporations get the opportunity to grab more and more of the riches of the world whereby the richer and the powerful become richer and the weaker and the poorer become poorer still. The solution for this is to return to God who is the source of justice and mercy and provider of life and the means of sustaining life. Instead of yielding to the forces of death and destruction we have to fight against these evils and work for justice, peace and integrity of creation. The proclamation of jubilee by our Lord at Nazareth was the message of Good News to the poor, the captives and the oppressed. So the theme of the Harare Assembly, 'Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope', is most appropriate for our day. It is a call to repent of all evil and to seek refuge in God's forgiving love, which will lead us to new life and fellowship in community. We are given the hope of the establishment of the Kingdom of God in which God's will will be fulfilled in individuals and the life of the world. This is the ground for rejoicing.

Thus in the midst of the forces of destruction and alienation we turn to God and to our fellow beings with a message of the triumphant love revealed in the Cross of Jesus Christ and can rejoice in the sure hope of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

The WCC is a sanctuary in a divided world. Fellowship, hope and common action are experienced in the program and assemblies.

All this helps us to remember God's call to unity and to live together in the love and the power of Holy Spirit in a fragmented world.

So we are called to:

- make greater efforts to educate our own faithful in local congregations, training centres and seminaries to respect and love members of other churches, as sisters and brothers in Christ
- promote knowledge of the heritage and contributions of other churches that confess the same Jesus Christ as God and Saviour, worship the same triune God and are engaged in the same witness in the world
- promote efforts towards reconciliation
- initiate dialogue at the local, national and regional levels with those engaged in mission work
- seek opportunities for working together with other churches on pastoral and social issues, and to cooperate with others in addressing the needs of the people
- continue to pray for Christian unity. The WCC is engaged in defining a common understanding and vision. Central to the life of the council is fellowship or koinonia. The churches have a mutual commitment with one another through the WCC in the recognition that they are related to one another, as they all belong to Christ. The WCC provides space for the exploration and enhancement of mutual relationship and unity.

We have also a common calling to offer service in the name of Christ to millions of people who are driven from their homes, by violence and natural calamities, and to raise voices against racism, discrimination and other evils affecting the lives of women and men.

Looking to the future, in the article on a Common Understanding and Vision in the Ecumenical Review, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) has formulated six affirmations:

- We need the WCC today and in the future to express the churches' striving for unity and fellowship, to take initiatives and to urge the churches to unity, koinonia and renewal.
- We need the WCC today and in the future to stimulate an ecumenical understanding of mission and evangelism and a corresponding practice of it in its member churches.
- We need the WCC today and in the future to be a prophetic voice and a platform for action as we face the global challenges of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.
- We need the WCC today and in the future to be a global platform for inter-faith dialogue.
- We need the WCC today and in the future to speak for the churches and to represent them in international affairs and at conferences on related issues.
- We need the WCC today and in the future to be a platform for preparing a universal ecumenical council of the whole church of Jesus Christ at the beginning of the next century.

So let us turn to God and rejoice in hope, on this occasion of the golden jubilee of WCC.

CCA-WCC Consultation on Globalisation

Lessons and experiences from Asia and the Pacific

The Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches organised a Consultation on 'Globalisation: Lessons and Experiences from Asia and the Pacific' held 21–22 September 1998 in New Delhi, India. This was organised as part of preparations for the Eighth General Assembly of the WCC, to be held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in December. About seventy delegates, mostly delegates to the WCC Assembly, attended the consultation to review, reflect and respond to the phenomenon of globalisation, based upon the lessons and experiences from an Asia-Pacific perspective. Coming from more than thirty countries of Asia and the Pacific, participants tried to learn of the impact of globalisation in different countries and how globalisation affects the lives of millions of people.

Resource persons competent in their respective fields who brought with them the wealth of their direct experiences from many countries across Asia and the Pacific assisted the participants in the review:

- Mr Kamal Malhotra, Co-Director of the Focus on Global South, Thailand, analysed the political economy of Asian development.

- Rev. Oscar Suarez, Professor of Eth-

ics in the Philippines, took up the issue of economic justice, highlighting theological and ethical concerns.

- Ms Vandana Shiva, a world-renowned scientist and environmental activist in India, evaluated the effects of globalisation in the context of biocolonisation.
- Dr Manuel Montes, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, shed much light on the Asian economic crisis.
- Prof. T.K. Oommen, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India, examined the social impact of globalisation.
- Dr Sevati Tuwere, Professor of Pacific Theological College, Fiji, gave an overview of globalisation from experiences in the Pacific.
- Dr Nguyen Minh Tu, a senior economist of the Institute of Economic Management, Vietnam, offered a glimpse into globalisation and market economic reforms in socialist countries in the context of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

A great part of the seminar was dedicated to discussions and reflections based on the presentations. While many of these were done spontaneously and informally, the participants also spent some time towards the end

to put on paper some of these reflections:

Reflections

We acknowledge that globalisation is here to stay. It is an unavoidable and irreversible force, which leaves us no choice but to accept it. It is a process, albeit unnatural and human-made, which will continue to pursue its course even as many are cognisant of its negative consequences.

People have a choice, however, to be more critical when we apprehend the phenomenon of globalisation. We can choose to be more informed about it, to be aware of its process, impact and effects on society and the environment. We can find out more about its constructive aspects as well as its destructive aspects. We can look at it in the context of a history of colonisation and modernisation. We can unravel some of the many guises in which globalisation expresses itself. Above all, we can analyse it, critique it and offer alternative ways of responding to the impact of globalisation.

While we acknowledge there are gains and positive effects from globalisation, we also have to raise questions as to who benefits most from these effects. We seem to see it as serv-



ing more the interests of a very few powerful people, corporations or nations. We seem to see it as an attempt by an elite group to control not only the market and economy, but with it our lifestyles, cultures and minds as well.

At the root of globalisation greed seems to be the operating force. It is the greed of those who wield power because of their wealth, status and skills. It is a greed that is willing to sacrifice the value of community for the sake of individualistic gains. It is a greed that has caused the devaluation of not only many local currencies, but also the lack of appreciation for local and indigenous cultures, customs and values. It is a greed that has exploited not only cheap labour, but the natural environment as well. For example, globalisation and free trade jeopardised the social situations of indigenous peoples. The globalisation process and the growing pressure of mega-projects undertaken by multinational companies threaten their environment, resources and security of lives. Greed nurtured and promoted through the process of globalisation has reduced the human person and other life forms to commodities—things to be possessed, patented, used and abused and eventually discarded.

It was observed that 'we feel almost helpless in the face of this gigantic malevolent force. We feel violated and robbed of our rights as we are pressured to pursue greater financial, trade and market liberalisation. We feel unfairly treated as we are called to compete with unequal partners on a playing field that is certainly not level. We feel that the majority of the poor people in the world are being

victimised in this whole process. In the face of these processes, and of the consequent impoverishment of the marginalised in society and deterioration of their situations, solutions may be found in the implementation of sustainable development strategies and protection of human rights and promotion of human dignity. In order to achieve this goal, we also feel that we are called to combat the ill effects of globalisation.'

*We need to speak up
against all forms of
exploitation, injustice
and any evil committed
in the name of progress
and globalisation*

Response

Particularly, we are called to conscientise those at the grassroots so that they are more aware of the phenomenon of globalisation. This could take the form of education and formation sessions on the origins, praxes and impacts of globalisation.

We are also called to conscientise political, societal and religious leaders so that they too will take globalisation more seriously. Specifically, more efforts should be directed at ways to convince these leaders to take the side of the poor and the marginalised. Besides, we are also called to personally minister to the victims of globalisation, especially the women and children. Not only should we alleviate their pain and sufferings, we also need to offer them alternatives and

ways of responding that are less dehumanising.

We therefore need to offer literacy programs and, especially, women's education and skills training, particularly for those most vulnerable to exploitation. We also need to embark on value education so that society may be more imbued with sound morals and less likely to perpetuate the evils of globalisation.

At the same time, we also need to speak up against all forms of exploitation, injustice and any evil committed in the name of progress and globalisation. Despite the church being a minority in most of Asia and the Pacific, we still need to exert that prophetic voice and be a moral force within society.

We also need to contribute theologically and spiritually to the conversation on globalisation. Specifically, we need to evolve new theological frameworks when doing contextual theologies so as to adequately address the phenomenon of globalisation. Implied would be the importance of integrating the findings of the social sciences and other disciplines into our theological reflections. Implied also would be the need to redefine the ecclesiological question of what it means to be Church.

We also need to be in conversation with persons of other religions since they, too, are finding ways to apprehend the phenomenon of globalisation. In the context of the multi-religiousness of our countries in Asia and the Pacific, the victims of globalisation certainly come from all religious traditions. As such, it is important that the religions see each other as allies and not competitors in

this confrontation against the evils of globalisation.

We ought to explore ways and means for better networking between ourselves, the churches and other agencies engaged in this war against the ills brought about by globalisation. In this respect, we should not hesitate to use the global communication systems and technology to our advantage. These avenues could also be used to mobilise more peoples into national actions against the globalisation forces. Above all, we should always be asking the question of Christian responsibility as we encounter the phenomenon of globalisation: 'What should we do to combat the negative impact of globalisation in this time, in this context and in this crisis? The invitation for us, then, is to listen to the voice of the Spirit of God and to respond with the daringness that led our Lord to the cross.

Besides, as church leaders, our position of privilege must always be looked upon more in terms of responsibility and duty rather than power and prestige. Like Queen Esther, who was reminded by Mordecai that she had the duty to speak up on behalf of her peoples (Esther 4), we, too, because of our education, skills and position, have the duty to speak up against the evil forces of globalisation.

We end by acknowledging that since God has turned to us in grace, we will respond in faith to the evils confronting us and act at all times in love, as we anticipate the coming, final fullness of God's presence in all of creation. Thus, in confronting the forces of globalisation, we will always remember to 'turn to God' and 'rejoice in hope'.

Jesus the Outcast

As part of the CCA Youth program series, *Reading the Bible through Asian Eyes*, a workshop was held at the Hsinchu Bible College of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan,

14–21 August 1998, with the theme 'Repositioning Church Mission in Asia'.

The following is a reflection on the workshop from the perspective of a participant,

Reuben Hardie, from Aotearoa New Zealand

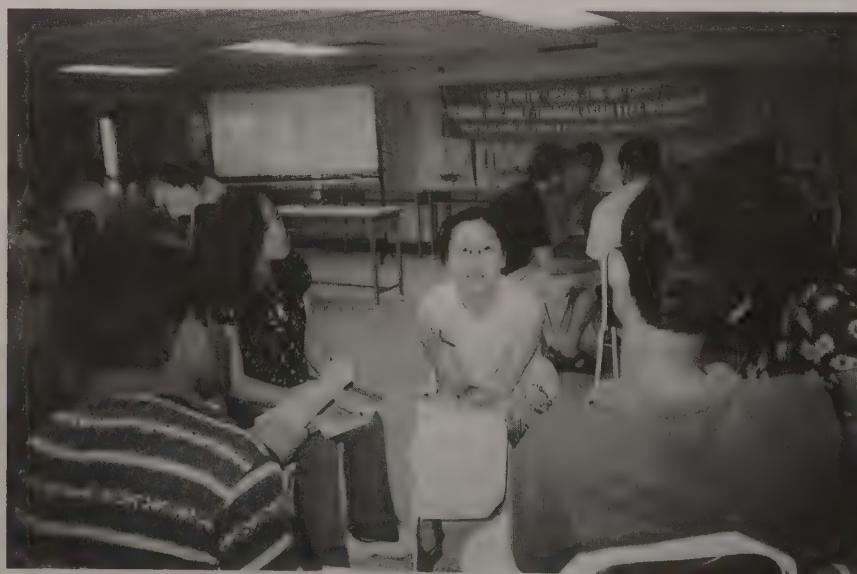
Twenty-four youth delegates from thirteen different countries throughout Asia came together to discuss how they understood the gospels of Jesus Christ in light of a particular marginalised group in their country. The workshop was specifically concerned with relating Jesus as the outcast to the marginalised of today.

The workshop was an incredible experience, both exhausting and inspirational. Throughout, the expression of so much cultural diversity and sameness stimulated much discussion, and brought both a breadth of imagination and an urgency to our task.

On reflection three aspects of the workshop have had a lasting impression—the culture of Taiwan, the peo-

ple of the Tayan community and the delegates from the various countries.

I arrived in Taiwan a day before the conference began, and was initially overwhelmed not only by the heat but also by the density of the population. Coming from a country of about three and half million people, I was amazed at the number of motor scooters and neon signs that filled the already seemingly overcrowded streets. During the first day, by chance we happened upon a Buddhist celebration proceeding down the central streets of Hsinchu. The singing, dancing, fireworks and costumes were spectacular. As the mysterious cultural and religious symbols passed by I could not help feeling envious of such a rich tradition.



The following day Lung Ngan Ling, CCA Executive Secretary for Youth and the coordinator of the workshop, welcomed all the participants officially. After a time of introductions and community building the participants were introduced to the history of Taiwan's struggle for independence by the Rev. Susan Chuang. The youth delegates from Taiwan also spoke strongly of a common desire felt by many Taiwanese to be recognised as a people with their own unique identity.

The introduction to the history and culture of Taiwan served as a preface to what was called 'the exposure experience', which involved the participants splitting into three groups and travelling to three distinct communities in Taiwan.

The group that I was a part of travelled to an aboriginal church in the mountains south of Hsinchu. When we arrived we were greeted and welcomed by the Tayan people through traditional dance and song. Into the early

hours of the morning we discussed with the pastor of the church the community's attempts to relearn its native tongue and culture in spite of the discrimination that they suffered at the hand of other Taiwanese.

The following day we observed the Sunday school and the worship service and toured the surrounding community, enjoying the generosity of the local people and observing something of their lifestyle.

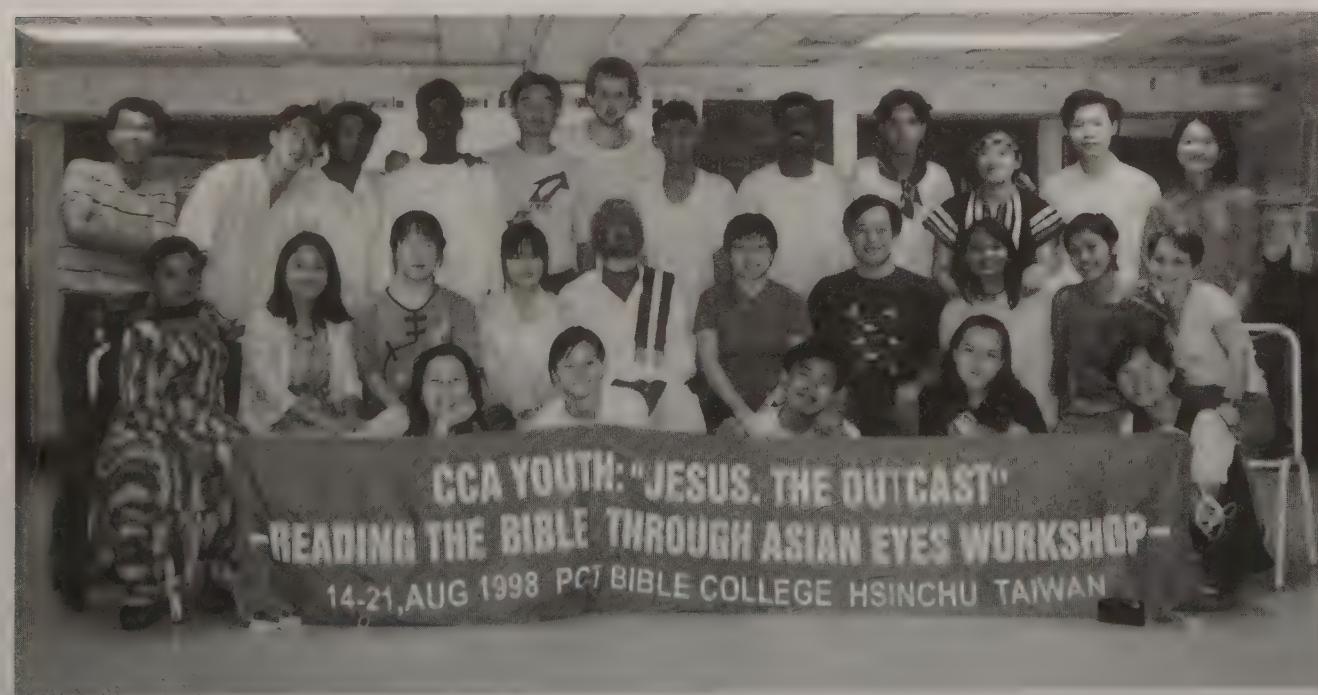
It came as some surprise to find a basketball court in the middle of what appeared quite a traditional community. I will never forget playing basketball with some of the younger members in the boiling hot sun. In spite of the language barrier, we managed to put together sizzling combinations on the basketball court, as the mountains that completely surrounded us reached up and touched the sky.

When all the participants had returned from their various exposure experiences the three groups, through

various media of song, dance and drama, presented something of what they had seen. This signalled the beginning of three very intense days.

During these days seminars were conducted by the two resource people, Rev. Dr Daniel Premkumar (India) and Yong Ting Jin (Malaysia). Through stories from his own experience in ministry, Dr Premkumar challenged us to engage with the gospels of Jesus Christ from our specific cultural contexts with the purpose of encouraging marginalised groups to reclaim the self-worth that they had been deprived of.

Yong Ting Jin on the other hand called us to re-look at the position of women in the church, and the extent to which the traditional neglect of many of the stories about women in the Bible were perpetuating an inequality. She prompted us to be both sensitive to a history of suppression and active in striving for ways to represent Jesus Christ as one who sought





to empower the women of his day.

Following each seminar the participants worked in small groups, reflecting on discussion questions and preparing group presentations in response to these questions.

As well as these seminars each country represented at the workshop presented a paper that they had prepared that related a marginalised group in their community to a particular biblical text. This proved both informative and intentional. As we listened to various stories of marginalisation and oppression, we attempted to make some sort of sense of a hurting world in light of the promise that permeates the gospels of Jesus Christ.

The entire workshop culminated in the cultural night, which involved the sharing of dance and song, food and gifts, and a great deal of laughter. While throughout the week we had been learning about each other through conversations, it was the cultural night that really enabled each of us to express our cultural particularity.

The next day we woke early and travelled into Taipei where we visited a local museum, garden,



church and temple, as well as the renowned night market. The night markets signalled the end of our week together as a group, and over the next couple of days the participants departed to their respective countries, very tired but filled with a sense of awe at all that had been seen and experienced.

Having returned to Aotearoa New Zealand I feel so enriched at having the opportunity to be part of such a transformative experience, as young people from diverse traditions came together to share in a plethora of cultural diversity and find a common vision in the gospels of Jesus Christ.

On behalf of the participants I would like to express our most sincere thanks to Ngan Ling, for all the energy and effort that she put into the workshop, and also the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan, especially the Bible College in Hsinchu, for their wonderful hospitality.

Reuben Hardie

Human Rights in Nepal

Nepal is a constitutional monarchy and the World's only Hindu kingdom. For centuries Nepal was closed to the outside world. Then, in 1951, Nepal opened its doors. Missionaries, both Nepalese of Indian origin and others long involved in evangelism along the Nepal-India border entered. The first church in Nepal was founded in Pokhran in the north of Nepal and the first church in the Kathmandu Valley was founded by Mar Thoma Syrian Church missionaries from Kerala, India, in 1952. However, the King and his government made laws to prohibit the spread of other religions. Throughout the autocratic rule of the Panchayat government, efforts were made to persecute Christians. But, despite opposition from the rulers, the number of Christian believers increased in Nepal and today there

are over 200,000, and there are over 500 churches throughout the country.

In 1990 the King, formerly an absolute monarch, legalised political parties, after which an interim government promulgated a new constitution. Since then Nepal has made progress in its transition to a more open society. However, problems remain, and the government has not enforced all the constitutional provisions regarding basic human rights. Police continue to torture detainees. Arbitrary arrests, political and extrajudicial killings, disappearances, detention, denial of fair public trial, religious persecutions and the like have been quite common. The government continues to impose restrictions on freedom of religion and expression. Although Nepal's constitution permits practice of all religions and prohibits discrimination on the basis of caste, the police harass members of minority religions.

The International Affairs Unit of CCA organised a two-day training workshop

on human rights in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 7-8 October 1998. About forty Nepalese church leaders attended. Topics dealt with at the workshop included the concept of human rights, human rights from Christian perspectives, international human rights instruments and protection mechanisms, globalisation and human rights, the churches' role in defending human rights, and human rights in Nepal.

Church leaders from rural areas who attended the workshop explained the persecution and police brutality against Christian believers in Nepal. They sought the support of the international community to highlight the plight of victims of human rights violations in their country.

This was the first time that CCA has organised a program for Nepalese Christians in Nepal.

Mathews George Chunakara



Participants at the Leadership Training/Workshop on Human Rights in Nepal

Consultation on Peace and Reconciliation in North East India

Where war rages the fiercest, a message of peace sounds all the more refreshing. Even the most violent men long for peace. In the midst of strife, the Gospel ought to be primarily about him who is our peace. Peacemaking has become a program of life for us, and educating people to peace an ongoing mission. Peace is undoubtedly a central message in Christianity. But

healing wounds is a challenging task. Healing memories of historic injuries is even more challenging. All tribes, peoples, communities, and races have painful memories that they have to learn to handle. It is unreasonable to seek "justice" in each case and impossible to pay compensation for each of these injuries. We will never be done with it.

'Extremely hard as it may sound, forgiveness is the only reliable strategy for ending the self-repeating phenomenon of unfairness in human history. Forgiveness alone can break the cycle of violence. It holds the ultimate key to that treasury which can pay all historic debts.'

So said Roman Catholic Archbishop Thomas Menampampil of Guwahati, Assam, India, at the North East India Church Leaders' Consultation on Peace and Reconciliation in North East India organised by the International Affairs Desk of CCA in Guwahati on 5–7 August 1998. About fifteen church leaders, mainly from the Kuki and Zomi ethnic groups, attended. Archbishop Thomas Menampampil deliv-

ered the keynote address at the consultation.

North East India, comprising seven states of the Indian union, has been in turmoil for the past several years. The reasons for the present disturbed conditions are many. Ethnic conflicts and insurgency in the region threaten peace and security. Innocent people are being killed as this insecurity prevails.

The most tragic aspect of the situation is a growing insensitivity to human suffering. Harsh examples of the cruelty of one group are picked up and imitated by others. The lives of innocent people, including women and children, are sacrificed to promote political causes or even to merely win general attention. Hatred is planted deep in the hearts of young people against the 'other', meaning the other ethnic group, political party, business interest, or state or central authority. Insurgent groups multiply and local gangsterism grows in their shade. Extortions have broken the backbone of the economy and insecurity keeps investors and technicians away. The

disturbed conditions have destroyed the academic atmosphere among students. Development programs are indefinitely delayed and cost more. Nothing is decided solely with a view to the effective carrying out of a work but more for the promotion of the political goals of contending parties.

In different parts of the region in turn, bridges are blown up, public buildings are damaged, telephone wires are cut, electric lines are stolen and sold and travelling by road and rail is made unsafe. Shops close early, picnic spots are unfrequented, small business drags on and fumbles and big impersonal businesses managed from a distance play with prices. Money poured into the region flows back to producers of consumer goods in other parts of the country. Remedial voices are silenced, the media are warned and the judiciary is threatened. No defence is offered against extortions, but the law comes down heavily on those who have yielded to their threats. So a circular witchhunt is launched.

The state of Manipur has been plagued by an ethnic war between the



Church Leaders' Consultation on Peace and Reconciliation in North East India held in Guwahati, Assam, India

Thaou Kukis and the Paite Zomis and Kukis and the Nagas. Riots and cold-blooded murder have been common scenarios for some time in Manipur, in which most people involved were Christians from different tribal ethnic groups.

The initiative taken by CCA, the first of its kind, brought together some key leaders of different church groups to promote the concern of peace education and peace and reconciliation initiatives in North East India. The National Council of Churches in India and the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India joined with CCA in its effort to promote peace and reconciliation. The Archdiocese of Guahati has also offered cooperation and assistance in a peace education program to be launched in 1999.

Mathews George Chunakara

Christian–Muslim Dialogue on Human Rights

A growing trend to use religion in state structures has seriously prejudiced the fundamental human rights of citizens in a number of countries in Asia, promoting violence, terrorism and intolerance among people. In order to develop a spirit of communal harmony and fellowship it is necessary to establish mutual dialogue between different communities in society. Religious leaders should play a role in liberating people from a situation of oppression in the name of religion.

The Christian Conference of Asia International Affairs unit organised 'Christian–Muslim Dialogue on Human Rights Solidarity', 6–8 September 1998 in Bangkok, Thailand. About thirty people, religious leaders, scholars and activists from Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Sri Lanka participated.

Theological Affirmation: Christian and Islamic Perspectives

Human rights is an ancient concept that can be traced back to many sources including religious traditions. The idea of the inalienable rights of each and every individual is promoted in many religions, especially the Semitic religions, which promote the idea of rights that have God as the focus of all human existence and action.

Christianity teaches that God endowed all human beings with God's own image. Strong moral values of justice, equality and human dignity were propagated by the prophets. Concern for widows, orphans, aliens and strangers was emphasised in the Biblical teachings, and God was seen at the periphery or 'among the marginalised'. Christ identified himself with the poor and the downtrodden. The Gospel messages uphold the need to be concerned about fellow human beings and the Acts of the Apostles presents the church as a community that continued the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ.

Human rights as an idea also took a positive shape some fourteen hundred years ago under Islam. Unlike the Western concept of human rights, human rights in Islam are divinely granted. The rights conferred by God are immutable and sacrosanct. They

are indivisible and inalienable and applicable to all human beings and no individual or institution has any right to tamper with them. The dignity of the individual ranks high in Islam. The Holy Qur'an warns repeatedly against persecution, denounces aggression and reminds believers of the need to observe justice in all their dealings. Warnings against persecution occur as many as 299 times in the Qur'an. It teaches two kinds of rights—the rights of God and the rights of human beings. The former includes the matters relating to religion and worship and the latter with the affairs and dealings with fellow human beings. Note that Islam lays greater emphasis on the rights of human beings than the rights of God. A large number of human rights find reference in the Holy Qur'an, and the right to life, personal freedom, justice and equality are specifically mentioned.

The freedom of religion and conscience that Islam has granted and the special status for non-Muslims in an Islamic state prove that Islam favours the ideas of pluralism and strictly prohibits compulsion in the matter of professing religion.

Politics and Religious Fundamentalism

The unique spiritual and religious heritage of Asia has been diminished in recent years as a result of the use of religion for political gain. A growing trend towards religious revivalism and resurgence are evident in several Asian countries. Pakistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Malaysia, India and Sri Lanka are examples. These countries had been subject to colonial rule and when they became independent they developed constitutions that spelt out a



Participants of the Christian–Muslim Dialogue on Human Rights Solidarity in Asia

democratic order guaranteeing fundamental rights to the citizen. However the Cold War period brought new problems and uncertainties in these countries, contributing to the creation of religious lobbies and religious fundamentalism. Countries in Asia with Muslim majorities are at the centre of this phenomenon. Almost all Asian Muslim countries are facing complex problems as a result of the conflict between religious forces in their societies and the demands of modern statecraft. Fundamentalist sects are using religion to gain a greater political grip, which leads to conflict between theocrats and secularists. This intensifies the denial of human rights, especially the rights of minority religious communities.

Today more than ever there is a stronger demand for Islamic resurgence and Islamic law. The tendency threatens non-Muslim religions. The different religious creeds of the majority are being imposed on minority communities, causing serious violations

of human rights in some countries, even in the courts, depriving citizens of their rights to participate in the business of the state. In some countries in Asia an 'apartheid' has been imposed, causing religious minorities to be thrown out of the mainstream of national political life.

Islamic Shariah and the Status of Non-Muslims

The Islamic shariah is the authentic code of life for Muslims, based on the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah (the actions and sayings of the Prophet Mohammed). In states having Muslims in a majority, religious militancy is manifested in state, judicial and administrative structures. The shariah is being effected by constitutional amendments and enforcing huddrod laws (penal laws). Non-Muslims living in these countries face serious problems as the shariah is made applicable to them also. Hence non-Muslims are deprived of their basic fundamental rights. The amended law on blasphemy in Paki-

stan is being used as a tool of oppression for settling personal scores and religious persecution. Ahmadis and Christians are the most hard hit. The right of adopting a religious faith of one's own choice has been seriously prejudiced because converts are treated as apostates against whom a religious decree to kill can be issued, depriving them of both the right of faith and the right of life. This situation creates an atmosphere of intolerance in religious, social and political fields, leading to much insecurity for non-Muslims. The introduction of the shariah is also being used by vested interests for power politics. Different interpretations of shariah provisions are also a cause of confusion. The Islamic faith being distorted by these vested interests is posing a threat to the rights of non-Muslims whereas Islam traditionally stood for a just security providing human rights to all, emphasising that there must not be any discrimination against anyone, particularly non-Muslims.

Christian-Muslim Solidarity for the Strengthening of Human Rights in Asia

As there are many Muslim countries in Asia claiming they are Islamic states but who also include Christians, Christian-Muslim solidarity is a key to any useful strategy for the protection of human rights in Asia. Both Christianity and Islam are divine religions that fight against injustice and oppression. The goal of both religions is the same. The prophets of both religions emphasised the need for caring for the poor, destitute, marginalised and disadvantaged sections of the society, and the modern concept of human rights is all about that. There is an urgent need for popularising the Qur'anic and Islamic message of believing in Jesus Christ and his mission and accepting Christians as the friends of Muslims. Persecution of Christians in Islamic states goes against the very tenets of Islam. Another Asian reality is that both Christians and Muslims live as minorities in a number of countries and therefore

face similar violations of human rights at the hands of majority. This means both Christians and Muslims should fight against injustice and violations of human rights unitedly and with the utmost solidarity with each other.

Mathews George Chunakara

Training for Cambodian Church Workers on HIV/AIDS

The epidemic has already spread beyond the cities and towns, into the villages of the countryside,' the Cambodian National AIDS Centre announced recently. 'Clearly the HIV epidemic has now spread to the general population.' Experts say a million Cambodians could

be infected with HIV and billions of dollars in earnings lost over the next decade unless the spread is brought under control.

Strife-torn Cambodia now ranks with Thailand and Burma in having the highest HIV rates in Asia. Of Cambodia's 11 million people, 140,000 people are known to carry the human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV), which can lead to the deadly acquired immuno-deficiency syndrome (AIDS). However, health officials estimate there could be twice that number—many do not know they are HIV positive. Cambodia's epidemic is the most severe recorded anywhere in the world outside Africa.

More than 40 per cent of prostitutes in Cambodia are infected with HIV, a much greater proportion than in Thailand, where far more work in the sex industry. The virus is now affecting the general population. Health care workers are seeing higher HIV rates in policemen, soldiers and married women. Young Cambodian adults in general have the highest level of infection, and women aged between 15 and 45 are the largest group at risk.

The National HIV/AIDS Centre report showed the continuing spread of HIV was overwhelming Cambodia's deteriorating health care system. At least 11 per cent of hospital beds in Phnom Penh are occupied by HIV patients.

CCA's Indochina Desk organised a training program for church workers from Cambodia on how to promote HIV/AIDS awareness among church members. Seven attended the program, which was held in Thailand, 22–30 April. The Bangkok office of Norwegian Church Aid provided assist-



Participants at the AIDS Training Program

ance in training and the Church of Christ in Thailand AIDS program arranged exposure visits to clinics and treatment centres for AIDS patients and other projects to rehabilitate AIDS victims: the Friends for Life Centre and the Population and Community Development Centre.

On their return to Cambodia, the participants promoted concern for AIDS in their local congregations and initiated awareness raising programs in three places.

Mathews George Chunakara

Churches Committed to Uprooted People

Once again, 'uprooted people' issues have been brought to the consideration of churches in Asia. Twenty church workers from Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to share experiences and search for a closer cooperation in ministry to uprooted people. The meeting was organised by CCA in cooperation with the Council of Churches in Malaysia (CCM) and the Asia Migrant Centre (AMC), 5–10 July 1998.

It was acknowledged that the mass migration of people is now being seen as one of today's major global dilemmas. Although the plight of migrant workers has been addressed continuously during the past three decades, the issue will become more and more serious in years to come as the world moves towards a new world order,

globalisation and a market economy. In addition, the economic crisis and financial turmoil in Asia have driven workers to leave their countries to escape the poverty of their home countries to assist their families.

Rapid industrial growth and local labour shortages in the so-called newly industrialising Countries (NICs) in Asia since the 1970s have compelled such places as Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand to accept large numbers of migrant workers. One estimate puts the number of migrant workers in Malaysia at 1.2 million (mainly from Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Myanmar), Singapore, 150,000 (mainly from Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh), and South Korea, 100,000 (mainly from China, the Philippines and Bangladesh). In the late 1980s, the economic boom in Thailand also saw massive inflows of migrant workers, estimated recently at 700,000, from Myanmar.

The year 1997 was a turning point, when the 'Asian miracle' suddenly burst and changed into region-wide financial and economic turmoil. This crisis will immediately and severely affect migrant workers as they are often the most vulnerable people in society. The unemployment rate in most Asian countries is the highest in a decade. To strengthen churches' responses to migrant issues, the following activities for the year 1999–2000, were affirmed as priorities:

- a directory of service providers for migrants
- awareness-raising (at the local, national, regional and international levels)

- direct services—counselling, organising, community building, and reintegration
- advocacy—campaigns, information exchanges
- action alert—as the need arises
- study—research towards policy and actions.

Prawate Khid-arn

Savings and Credit Workshop

'Savings mobilisation is considered now to be a crucial factor in the development of sound financial markets. There are a growing number of successful savings mobilisation programs in developing countries and governments and international agencies. Rural and non-wealthy households in particular have become the focus of policies to promote savings, as the myth that the poor have no margin over consumption for saving and do not respond to economic incentives are increasingly being questioned.'—World Bank.

In light of the current situation in Asia, twenty-three church workers from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka and India participated in a regional training workshop on 'Community-based Savings and Credit: Strengthening People's Managed Savings and Credit'. The program was organised by CCA Development and Service, 13–19 September 1998 in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The participants acknowledged that savings and credit is one way of dealing with the economic crisis, strength-

ening people-centred development and self-reliance and promoting a sustainable community. A participant, Ms Chandra Kesavan, said, 'A savings culture promotes the ownership of capital and develops financial discipline and regularity. Its sustainability depends on the self-reliance of the group and viability of operations.'

Mr Rexvalor Reyes elaborated on financial management and said that factors that influence savings include such things as the willingness to save, income level, social and cultural values, facility to save, interest rates and the reliability of the organisation.

Mr Ranjit de Silva emphasised savings as a development tool for landless and near-landless people especially. In his experience, the activity seems to be more successful among women's groups.

The participants in the workshop committed themselves to develop savings schemes when they return to their own communities.

CCA Development and Service has launched a 'Saving and Sharing Pro-



Drama

gram' to promote community ownership, local participation and people-centred development. A series of training workshops are being conducted in various countries and regions twice a year during 1998 to 2000.

Prawate Khid-arn



Dr Carol Sobritchea introducing a game in the Gender Awareness and Sensitivity Training Program

Gender Awareness and Sensitivity Training

'When we dream alone it remains a dream but when we dream together that is the beginning of reality.'

(Bishop Oscar Romero)

These words were taken to heart as women and men met in Thailand and Sri Lanka for gender awareness and sensitivity courses, a continuing joint program between the CCA Development and Service Desk and Women's Concerns.

From 7 to 13 June twenty-six women and men met at the Suwannakit Hotel in Chiang Mai, Thailand, with participants coming from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand. By arrangement with the



Rev. Lakawa and Dr Sobritchea at the Gender Awareness and Sensitivity Course

WCC Pacific Desk, two participants came from PNG and Tahiti. Their attendance was exciting and enriching.

Dr Carol Sobritchea from the University of the Philippines presented the units on gender stereotyping and gender awareness, patriarchy and globalisation/development and their effect on the lives of Asian women. Dr Chuleephan Srisoontorn-Persons from Thailand gave the opening address as well as facilitated the Bible studies with the focus on inclusive community:



Indian dances



The welcome: Vasanthi Rajkumar, CCA Women's Concerns Moderator and Pathma Hensman, NCCSL Women's Secretary



Role playing

'Everyone Is in the Image of God', 'Exploitation and Struggle of Women', 'Women in Society: Empowering for Participation' and 'Women and Men: Together in Partnership for God's Mission'. The integration of women's experience in the Bible with women's experience in Asia today was a good starting point for discussion, reflection and sharing.

These topics and method for Bible study were also the focus at the course held in Sri Lanka, with St Margaret's Retreat centre in Colombo as the venue during 4–11 July. Participants journeyed from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Rev. Temmy Lakawa, a young theologian from Indonesia joined Dr Carol Sobritchea as the other resource person. Rev. Lakawa facilitated excellent Bible studies that prompted long and involved discussions and open sharing by all participants. Rev. Dr Ipe Joseph joined with the participants to give the opening address, which was well appreciated by everyone, with his focus on an integrative approach rather than a confrontative approach to inclusive community and gender awareness raising. Similarly to Thailand, the program was presented through input, drama, role-playing and small-group work. The groups functioned well together and were the scenes of good discussion, reflection and sharing.

As with previous programs, we looked into communication between the sexes, a lively time of conversation between the women and men as they ponder their different ways of communicating with each other. Time was spent at both locations doing action planning for reconnection with family, local congregation and community from a gender-aware perspective. Because of the solidarity between the women and the small groups of men present, achieved through mutual experience, the input, the sharing and the confidence gained from being together, there was a strong expressed enthusiasm and a vitality to become agents for transformation on their return. For most of them, though, given

their contexts, it will be far from easy. It is hoped that a manual for training of trainers will be published sometime during 1999.

There was a lot of hard work put in by the Women's Desk of CCT and NCCSL to enable both programs to take place and they are sincerely thanked by the CCA Women's Concerns Coordinator for their generosity and effort.

Glynthea Finger

and productive experience, which will climax with a book to be published showing the artwork and material that emerged from the collaborative effort of all present.

The evolution of the material for the small book was an interesting process. Each morning Chung Sook Ja facilitated discussion/reflection from scripture focusing on Mary of Magdala, Abigail, the Samaritan woman and Debora. These experiences were linked with experiences of women in Asia. Out of this sharing, the artwork, poems and songs emerged.

The major painting was initiated through a process that had each participant listening to an agreed upon poem—on this occasion based on one of the Bible Studies: Mary. After the reading, each woman then named a word from the poem that had spoken to her.

Each participant started to draw for an allotted time on a piece of art paper, which was then passed to the next person—each person commencing a work. Each one then contributed to the pieces of art circulating. At the con-

Women Artists

A small workshop with four women artists, Evelyn Liang Kan (Hong Kong), Julianne Clarke Morris (Aotearoa/Japan), Hanna Varghese (Malaysia), Arlene Villaver (Philippines), together with feminist theologian, Rev. Dr Chung Sook Ja from Korea met in Dhyana Pura, Bali, Indonesia, 12–16 July, prior to the ACAA Twentieth Anniversary Celebration. The workshop, facilitated by CCA Women's Concerns, proved to be an extremely enriching





Working on the painting



Workshop participants and their finished painting

clusion of the allotted time, after discussion and deliberation, one of the collaborative efforts was chosen to form the basis of the major work. This final work forms the basis for the book and is an expression of the collective spirituality of the artists as they reflected upon the experiences of women both in scripture and in Asia.

This workshop was held to mark the end of the 'Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women' and the book and artwork are to be taken to the Decade Festival in Harare as part of the CCA Women's Desk contribution.

Glynthea Finger

South Asia Council of Churches' Second Meeting

The second meeting of the South Asia Council of Churches (SAAC) was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, 4–6 October 1998. It was sponsored by NCC India and hosted by the Nepal Christian Service, a national association of Protestant churches in Nepal.

The meeting discussed the alarming situation in South Asia: the arms race and nuclear proliferation, increasing religious fundamentalism, ethnic conflict and civil war, border disputes and human rights violations, and the effects of globalisation. Church leaders reiterated their commitment to strengthen South Asian churches' unity and fellowship. In a communiqué the participants said, 'We acknowledge our responsibility to the people of the SAARC region (South Asian Association

of Regional Cooperation), especially to the Christian community. We believe that we have to renew our commitment for unity of the church and cooperation among the councils of SAARC nations.'

The importance of forming a forum of SAARC region NCCs was first mooted in Hyderabad, India, in 1994. After two meetings of NCC general secretaries of South Asia the SAAC was officially launched in a meeting of South Asian church leaders held on 5–8 October 1996 in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

S.M. Chowdhury, Convenor, SAAC

UEM's First Asia Regional Assembly

The first Asia Regional Assembly of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) was held in Hong Kong 31 July to 7 August 1998. Dr Feliciano Cariño, General Secretary of CCA, pre-

sented the keynote paper. UEM is an international missionary communion with thirty-three member churches in Africa, Asia and Germany. It is the successor to the Vereinigte Evangelische Mission—a German missionary organisation that amalgamated the Rhenish Mission, the Bethel Mission and the Zaire Mission.

The member churches of UEM in Asia are mostly from Indonesia (eleven churches) along with the Chinese Rhenish Church in Hong Kong, the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka and the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. With the exception of the Chinese Rhenish Church, all these churches are members of CCA as well.

UEM was established a regional office in Manila staffed by Ruth Quiocco as regional coordinator. Peter Denberger is the Area Secretary for East Asia, based in Wuppertal. Bishop Soritua Nababan is the Moderator of the UEM General Assembly and is a member of the Asia Executive Board.



UEM recognises the importance of cooperating with ecumenical bodies, such as CCA, and the importance of avoiding duplication. It passed a resolution directing the Asia Coordinator of UEM to investigate how such cooperation might be nurtured for common planning, decision making and effective division of labour.

CCA hosted a dinner for the UEM Regional Assembly on 5 August.

Christine Ledger

Lutheran Church Joins NCC Australia

The fellowship of the National Council of Churches in Australia has expanded with the admission into membership of the Lutheran Church of Australia. This was one of the first actions of the third meeting of the NCCA National Forum, which met in Sydney, Australia, in October. The Lutheran Church had undertaken a careful and comprehensive process of consultation and voting among its members before reaching the decision to seek membership. The NCCA now encompasses memberships of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Uniting churches along with the Churches of Christ, the Salvation Army and the Religious Society of Friends. The National Forum was marked by a clear sense of a deepening fellowship among the churches, four years after the inauguration of the new ecumenical body. Considered attention was given to faith and unity concerns, with Dr Mary Tanner a keynote speaker. The churches are planning for a 'Journey to the Heart' to

mark the new millennium, with church leaders and young people making a pilgrimage to Uluru at the red centre of the continent.

The Australian federal election was held in the course of the National Forum, an event keenly followed by churches concerned about racism in Australian political life. Pauline Hanson's One Nation party failed to win a seat in the House of Representatives and its leader lost her seat also. The churches maintain their commitment to reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

The General Secretary, Rev. David Gill, was reappointed General Secretary for a further three years and was warmly commended for his leadership in the transition process from the Australian Council of Churches to the NCCA. The President of NCCA is Roman Catholic Archbishop John Battersby.

Guests from the Papua New Guinea Council of Churches, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the Christian Conference of Asia each addressed the National Forum. Particular interest was shown in recent developments in Indonesia. Christine Ledger, Associate General Secretary for Finance, represented CCA at the meeting.

Christine Ledger



Archbishop John Battersby, NCCA President, welcomes the Rev. Dr Lance Steicke, head of the Lutheran Church of Australia

USA Delegation Visit to China

A National Council of Churches of Christ (USA) delegation, including Ambassador Andrew Young and his wife and the Rev. Dr Joan B. Campbell, visited China in October to look at the current status of church-state relations in China.

The delegation met with NCCC's historic partner—the China Christian Council, with high government officials and with such governmental bodies as the influential foreign policy think tank, the Shanghai Institute for International Relations.

The visit represented the first official participation of Ambassador Young as NCCC President Elect for 2000–01. Dr Campbell serves on the US State Department Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad.

Victor Hsu, NCCC/Church World Service Director for East Asia and the Pacific, said that the delegation expressed the concerns of US churches about reports of religious persecution in China, affecting not only places of worship but also the lives of individuals, including persons in prison.

Besides Andrew and Carolyn Young, Dr Campbell and Mr Hsu, NCCC delegation members included Dr Peter Pizor (Chair of the Worldwide Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church, USA), Ms Sharon Maeda (Deputy General Secretary, Mission Contexts and Relationships/Mission Education, General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church) and Rev. Dr Albert A. Pennybacker (NCCC Associate General Secretary for

Public Policy).

The delegation visited Shanghai, Nanjing and Beijing. The schedule included a visit to the headquarters of the China Christian Council, and meetings with Bishop K.H. Ting and with Dr Han Wenzao, President of the China Christian Council. *NCCC USA*

Church of North India Elects New Officers

Over 200 delegates from twenty-six dioceses all over North India, fraternal representatives from partner churches in different parts around the world, resource persons, speakers and guests attended the 10th Ordinary Synod of the Church of North India (CNI). The Synod was held at St Stephen's College, Delhi, 7–12 October 1998.

Meeting every three years, and meeting this year around the theme

'Our Pilgrimage to the 21st Century', the synod reviewed programs, set new mandates, discussed issues of public policy, and assessed the status of the church's various administrative and organisational structures, resources and institutions. Globalisation and the emerging political and international questions that have arisen as a result of the recent testing of nuclear arms by India and Pakistan were among the issues that were given considerable attention during the synod.

The synod also elected the new officers for the church for the triennium 1998–2001. The Most Rev. Vinod A.R. Peter, the Bishop of the Diocese of Nagpur, was elected Moderator, and the Rt Rev. Z. James Terom, Bishop of the Diocese of Ranchi, was elected Vice Moderator. The other synod office bearers are Dr V.S. Lall, General Secretary, and Mr Enos Das Pradhan, Treasurer. The Most Rev. D.K. Mohanty is the Immediate Past Moderator of the synod.

Dr Feliciano V. Cariño, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, represented CCA at the synod and gave the Bible studies.



The Most Rev. D.K. Mohanty, Moderator, lights the candle at the opening worship and eucharist

Church of Christ in Thailand General Assembly

The twenty-fifth General Assembly of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), entitled 'Behold, I Make All Things New!' (Revelation 21:5), was held 19–23 October 1998 at Chiang Rai Wittayakhom School, Chiang Rai Province, in the upper

northern part of Thailand. About 700 church delegates, fraternal missionaries and guests attended the meeting, glorifying God the Saviour, studying the Bible, listening to various reports, designing policies and electing new officers and general committee members.

Dr Feliciano V. Cariño, Secretary-General of CCA, delivered words of greeting on behalf of the churches in Asia emphasising that 'we live at another turning point in Asian history, experiencing uncertainty, problems and volatility in economic, social and political life. The ecumenical movement was a sign of hope for a suffering and broken world. It is needed to be so again in our time. Your leadership, your partnership, your fellowship will be vital in these crucial years.'

The prime event of the assembly was policy making for the next four years, 1999–2002, of CCT. Six missions to be covered include:

- church life
- church unity
- human resource development and welfare
- education
- medical care
- finance and property development.

Four new officers were elected for 1999–2002:

- Rev. Dr Boonrat Buayen, Moderator
- Rev. Samran Kuangwaen, Vice Moderator
- Rev. Dr Sint Kinhabchandra, Secretary-General
- Deacon Mr Taweesak Mahachavaro, Treasurer

The Church of Christ in Thailand is a fellowship of the Protestant churches in Thailand, with about 70,000

members organised into 'paks' (presbyteries), of which there are now nineteen, and twenty-eight schools, two colleges and universities and seven hospitals. A nation-wide general assembly meets every two years. Its chief officers are elected for four years and can be re-elected for a further four.

Prawate Khid-arn

Prayer for Christian Unity 1999

From its inception the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been an integral part of the ecumenical movement. The week provides churches with the opportunity to express their thankfulness for what they have received from God and for what has been achieved in the ecumenical movement, especially in this last century.



'I will be their God and they will be my children'
Revelation 21:7

The basic material for the Week of Prayer for 1999 (18–25 January or at other times in some places) was prepared by an ecumenical group brought together by the Council of Churches of Malaysia, which chose as its text Revelation 21:1–7. This text invites Christians to look to the future with hope, provide by the inspiring vision of the

holy city not made by human hands, but offered by God to humanity as a gift and promise.

A set of materials for planning activities during the week is available from local churches or the WCC.

The Week of Prayer text for 2000 has also been announced. It is based on a draft prepared by a local ecumenical committee with members from four 'families' of churches that belong to the Middle East Council of Churches—the Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Catholic and Reformed churches. Archbishop Paul Matar, president of the Ecumenical Commission of the Assembly of Patriarchs and Catholic Bishops of Lebanon, coordinated the work of the local ecumenical committee.

The theme for 2000 is 'Blessed be God ... who has blessed us in Christ' (Ephesians 1:3). Materials for 2000 will be available in February 1999

New Anglican Province in Hong Kong

The Anglican Communion has a new province—the Province of Hong Kong Sheng Kung Kui. On 25 October 1998 a gathering of more than 4,000 people witnessed the inauguration of the province and the installation of its archbishop, the Most Rev. Peter Kwong Kong Kit. The Archbishop of Canterbury presided over the proceedings and Bishop K.H. Ting, Honorary President of the China Christian Council attended. The Christian Conference of Asia was officially represented by one of its presidents, Deaconess Margaret Rodgers.

AIDS Sunday 1998



Number of adults and children living with HIV/AIDS —total 30.6 million

HI/V/AIDS continues to spread around the world. Estimates by the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that by the beginning of 1998 over 30 million people were infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and that 11.7 million people around the world had already lost their lives to the disease. Unless a cure is found

or life-prolonging therapy can be made more widely available, the majority of those now living with HIV will die within a decade.

In addition to medical, social and ethical issues, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) realises that the HIV/AIDS pandemic raises questions related to theology and spirituality.

The first Sunday of December of every year has been declared 'AIDS

Sunday' to express churches' concerns and solidarity with those people living with HIV and AIDS and to express concern and compassion for their families and their carers.

The CCA encourages member councils and churches to remember and extend love and care to those people by organising special services on Sunday, 6 December 1998.

Prawate Khid-arn

Update

This is the third issue of *CCA News*. I have had the privilege of editing for the CCA, and would like to thank all those who have expressed appreciation of my efforts. In particular I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Christine Ledger, who has

been so helpful and so patient coordinating the last two issues at the Hong Kong end. We will all miss her when she returns to Australia. I would also like to thank Glynthea Finger, Mathews George Chunakara, Henriette Hutabarat and the rest of the staff at CCA for their hospitality and assistance and Dr Feliciano V. Cariño for his support and leadership.

The observant reader will have noticed this issue is dated December 1998. While our production schedule remains the same, future issues will be dated March, June, September and December to reflect more the reality of dispatch.

May God bless you richly at this Christmas time and in the year to come.

Geoff Alves

Human Rights Liturgy to Commemorate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Theme: Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Background

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) proclaims that every one has the 'right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood ... Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance'.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, one of the instruments guaranteeing the UDHR, reaffirms the duty of the states party to the covenant to ensure the realisation of these rights. However, although the UDHR was promulgated fifty years ago, in most countries the declaration has yet to make any impact. Basic rights are still being denied. The concepts of development and market-oriented economic reforms, globalisation of markets, liberalisation of trade and demands for the maximisation of economic growth have created a fragmented social order and pushed countries economically and socially off-balance.

The political economy of God's covenant was visible several centuries before modern human rights covenants emerged. God's covenant envisioned an equality and justice in which God called on the people of God to protect the rights of the weakest. 'Justice and justice alone you

shall perceive' was this covenant's mandate and foundation. The story of Israel demonstrates this covenant relationship of God with the people of God. Israel was to be a community based on justice, in which all persons were to be recognised as equal before God and in society. But Israel often fell short of this vision. The laments of prophets in succeeding generations show how God reminded the Israelites of their role and duties: 'Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!' (Amos 5:24) The disintegration of the Israelites' society placed the poor at the mercy of the rich. The story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21) tells of the despotism of the wealthy and the role of the prophet as the bearer of God's judgment on those who failed to recognise basic human rights. Israel's story teaches us a lesson that justice and righteousness were not only to be manifested in the political order of Israel, but that the mandates of the covenant dealt with the economic and social relationships as well. A number of divine commandments delineate this idea and emphasise the need to observe righteousness and protect human dignity. 'When you reap the harvest of your land you shall not reap into the edges of your field ... you shall leave them for the poor ... you shall not keep a hired man's wages till the next morning.' (Leviticus 19:9-13) 'At the end of every seventh year you shall make remission of debts.' (Deuteronomy

15:1-2). The earth is the Lord's.' (Psalm 24:1) These examples of God's commandments to his people establish a principle of equality in the distribution and equalisation of the community's resources. The idea of meeting the basic needs of all in society, Israelites and aliens, was emphasised in God's covenant. Jesus' proclamation of his mission in Nazareth emphasised

the issue of justice even more eloquently (Luke 4:18-19). Not only did he promise the renewal of the covenant but also the fulfilment of the jubilee year, when all social inequities were to be rectified. The worth and dignity of every individual is the concern of God and the life and sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the manifestation of this truth.

Order of Liturgy

Opening prayer

Lord of all creation, who made us understand our human dignity in the suffering and shame of your Son, Jesus Christ, enable us to celebrate your divine presence among us. God of justice and peace, give us the strength to be your witness and guide us with your spirit.

Scripture readings

Old Testament: Leviticus 25:18-34

New Testament: James 2:1-11

Prayer

God of all creation,
We hold before you those sisters and brothers
who have been experiencing situations of
vulnerability in their life:
the daily economic, social and cultural
injustices,
the unequal distribution of agricultural land,
creating situations of social and economic
inequalities,
poor onshore fishermen being deprived of
their livelihood,
uncontrolled trawling destroying the marine
ecosystem,
forest resources being exploited at an
alarming rate,
sex tourism being promoted in developing
countries
leading to exploitation of women and
children and drug abuses and socially
transmitted diseases,
national culture and identity being destroyed

or eroded by the promotion of tourism,
discrimination against tribals, untouchables,
ethnic minorities,
bonded labourers and migrant workers.

Silence

We pray for all who have been denied human dignity and human rights.

Responsive prayer

Creating God, our land is a wilderness where injustice prevails, people die of hunger, malnutrition and starvation, the earth devastated and depleted by human greed.

O God, open our hearts to understand the realities, look with mercy on those on whom the miseries of catastrophes have fallen. Extend your guiding hands upon us that we may find strength to minister to those who are hurt. Lord, forgive our sin.

God of justice and peace, who has created us in your image and entrusted this universe to us through your Son Jesus Christ, show us the way to true repentance that we may confess the disorder and hatred, cruelty and injustice which we have caused.

Forgiving God, we have failed to build a community that has justice for its foundation, peace for its ideal, love for its law. Strengthen us to build a community where justice and human rights prevail. Hear our prayers.

Amen.

Prepared by Mathews George Chunakara

New Publications from CCA

The Blasphemy Law in Pakistan and Its Impact

Edited by Mathews George Chunakara
\$US2

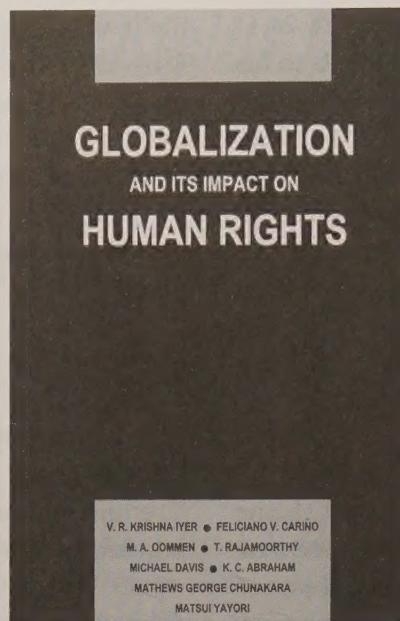
An amendment to the Pakistan Penal Code has made the death sentence mandatory for the offence of blasphemy against the prophet Mohammed. This has caused non-Muslims to live in a state of fear and several false accusations have been made.

This booklet includes an analysis by Naeem Shakir on the impact of the blasphemy law as well as background material and responses from CCA and the WCC.

THE BLASPHEMY LAW IN PAKISTAN AND ITS IMPACT

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA

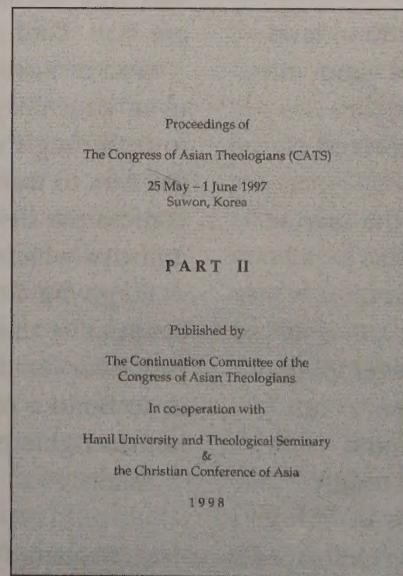
- These publications can be obtained from the Christian Conference of Asia, 96, 2nd District, Pak Tin Village, Mei Tin Road, Sha Tin, N.T., Hong Kong, China, telephone + 852 2691 1068, fax + 852 2692 4378, or e-mail cca@hk.super.net.



Proceedings of the Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS), Part II

Edited by Feliciano V. Cariño
\$US10

This book includes the main papers of the Congress of Asian Theologians held 25 May–1 June in Suwon, Korea, as well as reports of the Issue Working Groups and the Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Study Groups.

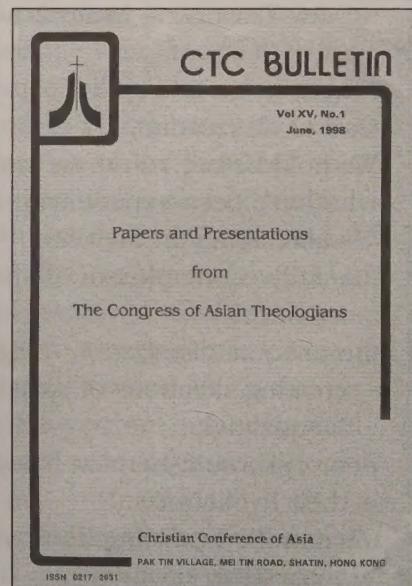


Globalization and Its Impact on Human Rights

Edited by Mathews George Chunakara
\$US10

The advocates of globalisation describe it as a panacea for all economic woes, and that the only path to prosperity is to adhere to free-market principles. But it has also brought in its wake great inequities, mass impoverishment and despair and financial and economic crises, enriching only a small minority while marginalising and violating the basic human rights of millions of others.

This book is an outcome of the Consultation on Globalisation and Its Impact on Human Rights held in Bangalore, India, earlier this year, and includes some of the papers presented.



CTC Bulletin

Vol. XV, No. 1, June 1998
\$US10

This issue of the *CTC Bulletin* contains the main papers presented at the foundation meeting of the Congress of Asian Theologians held in Suwon, Korea, last year.

Death of Shanti Solomon

It is with great sadness that we report the passing away of Shanti Solomon on 15 October 1998 of a heart attack in New Delhi, India. Shanti Solomon had a long and distinguished ecumenical career, both in India and internationally. She was a woman of rare vision and under her guidance, numerous programs were initiated, many of which developed into fully-fledged organisations of their own. These include the Fellowship of the Least Coin, the Asian Christian Women's Conference, the All India Council of Christian Women (now a unit within the National Council of Churches in India), and the Association of Theologically Trained Women in India.

Shanti Solomon, however, will always be associated with the Fellowship of the Least Coin, an ecumenical movement for prayer and reconciliation that was born of her own experience of not being allowed to enter South Korea in the mid-1950s.

FLC was very closely associated with the East Asia Christian Conference (now CCA) from its inception, as a program of ACWC, which itself was attached to the EACC Committee on Co-operation of Men and Women in Home, Church and Society. Until 1980, ACWC was still considered, even tangentially, the 'Women's Desk' of CCA, reiterated by the fact that Shanti Solomon, as Executive Secretary of ACWC, was coopted for all regular CCA staff meetings and also for the General Committee.

Far more than what she started, Shanti Solomon will always be remembered as a woman of great humility.



Shanti Solomon

and serenity. As her successor in FLC, Shirin Samuel, once wrote, 'The more I know her, the more it becomes clear that she is humble because she is one of the most satisfied persons with what God has given her. She never makes people her rivals. She has a unique capacity to accept people as her partners from whom she can get strength and becomes a source of strength to them. This is what provides her with great happiness, contentment and satisfaction.'

Married for ten years and widowed for thirty-eight, Shanti's family was the Community of St Stephen, where she lived in Delhi, and the women and men around the world with whom she encountered and whose lives she touched.

Lakshmi Daniel



The symbol of the Fellowship of the Least Coin, at first glance a beautiful flower, which is revealed to be a circle of hands in prayer

Tribute

Esther Byu, on behalf of the International Committee for the Fellowship of the Least Coin has sent the following message of sympathy and loving tribute:

'I am deeply saddened by the news. I would like to express our deepest sympathy to Shanti's relatives, loved ones, friends and all those whose lives have been touched and blessed by Shanti's love, compassion and commitment to a course for justice, peace and reconciliation by giving birth to and promoting the Fellowship of the Least Coin: An Ecumenical Global Prayer Movement which she envisioned in 1956.'

'We celebrate the life of Shanti, the Mother and Founder of the Fellowship of the Least Coin, with thanksgiving: paying tribute to her and giving honour to God who created her and used her to embody the message of love and forgiveness and to minister to the least: the poor, the sick, the wounded, the broken and the victims of hatred, violence, oppression, injustice, conflicts and wars, through the Fellowship of the Least Coin.'

'In memory of our beloved Mother, Aunt, Sister and Friend Shanti, may we pause to allow ourselves to be transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit and be inspired to do justice, to love kindness, to forgive and to walk humbly with our God.'

Let Us Even Now Go

(Cebuano: Manglakat na Kita)

(♩ = c.144)

B♭

Nang – la – kat na ki – ta
 1. Let us e – ven now go to Beth – le – hem,
 2. Let us e – ven now of fer love and – praise
 3. Let us e – ven now sing with heart and soul;

Cm F7 B♭

sa Be – len sa Hu – di – ya.
 go to Beth – le – hem of Ju – de – a.
 to the Lord, our God, to the Lord, our God,
 'Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!'

Kay ang Ha – ri sa ma – nga ba – ri
 Je – sus Christ, our Lord, he is the King of Kings;
 who from heav – en's throne has sent a gift of love,
 Let us sing our praise that all the world may know,

Cm F7 B♭

sa Be – len na – ta – wo na,
 now in Beth – le – hem is born!
 Je – us Christ, God's on – ly Son,
 all the world may know God's love,

Cm F7 B♭

sa Be – len na – ta – wo na.
 now in Beth – le – hem is born!
 Je – us Christ, God's on – ly Son.
 all the world may know God's love.

Luke 2:15

Words: Angel Sotto, Philippines, sts. 2 and 3 Lois F. Bello

Music: Maglakat, Angel Sotto, Philippines, arr. Elena G. Maquiso

VINCENT MANANSALA (PHILIPPINES): MADONNA
 (COURTESY 'CHRISTIAN ART IN ASIA' BY MASAO TAKENAKA)

